asked to name the people who had had a major influence on my thinking, I was compelled to name you and Carl Ketcherside. I want to thank you for the way you have ministered to so many of us and for helping us to open our minds and hearts to those who may differ from us. My beginnings were in the Christian Church and Churches of Christ. I attended Abilene Christian College, and while there, you and Carl Ketcherside came to my apartment to speak to a number of graduate students. *—Merritt Watson, Bethany Christian Church (Disciples), Arapahoe, NC.*

I would appreciate knowing if female deacons have ever been common in churches of Christ and why there is a gap between the teaching of the scholars and the practice of the church. It seems from my reading that female deacons were the norm in the thinking of many church of Christ leaders of the 19th and 20th century. Those that I have read that favor or encourage female deacons include Alexander Campbell, J. M. Barnes, Tolbert Fanning, Robert Milligan, Moses Lard, David Lipscomb, J. W. McGarvey, Isaiah Grubbs, David King, and more recently, C. R. Nichol, J. Ridley Stroop, J. D. Thomas, Tom Olbricht, J. W. Roberts, and Carl Spain. I personally believe there were female deacons in the early church, and that we are going to have to face some hard decisions on this question in the future. *—J. Stephen Sandifer, Southwest Central Church of Christ, Houston, TX.*

(The reason you find virtual unanimity on the matter of deaconnesses in the primitive churches is that the relevant passages make it clear that both men and women served as deacons, which, interestingly enough, is the same word for minister or servant. And yet one can hardly find a Church of Christ today that has women as well as men deacons. Here we have the sociological influence, or an instance of where our culture has impacted our practice more than what the Bible actually teaches. The Church of Christ, certainly in terms of leadership, is a man's church. In spite of the Bible we have denied women their rightful place just as our culture in general has. *—Ed.*).

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RESTORATION REVIEW

On Being Heavenly Minded

Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade all left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world. *—C. S. Lewis*

In This Issue:

Do We Sleep and Await a Final Judgment?

Volume 29, No. 7 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **September, 1987**

The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation . . .

WHAT INSPIRATION MEANS AND DOES NOT MEAN

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. — 2 Tim. 3:16

We should recognize first of all that whatever we determine *inspiration* to mean the *how* of inspiration will always elude us. It is like other acts of God, whether the creation of the universe or the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We can accept the *fact* when we cannot explain the *how*. No one knows, including scientists and theologians alike, how God does or has done his mighty works. This includes inspiration, whether of men or of documents.

It is also appropriate at the outset to realize that the acceptance of the inspiration of Scripture is a matter of faith and not a matter of scientific proof. No one can *prove* that the Bible is inspired, just as no one can *prove* that the universe has a Creator. Some things, such as the order and design of things, strongly indicate a Creator, but other things, such as all the suffering and pain, might indicate otherwise. And so some people believe in a Creator and some do not. It is a matter of faith, not of science. So with the Bible. Its lofty and inspiring passages point to God's guiding hand, but other passages with their historical inconsistencies and questionable ethics suggest otherwise. And so some people believe in the inspiration of Scripture and some do not.

It may also prove helpful to realize that while the proposition *All Scripture is inspired of God* is true (to the believer), the converse of that, *All inspired writings are Scripture*, is not. A document may be inspired by God and still not be Scripture. The passage before us, 2 Tim. 3:16, states only that if it is Scripture it is inspired, and not that if it is inspired it is Scripture. False conversion is an old fallacy that we must guard against. It is more obviously fallacious in this conversion: All children are human beings, therefore all human beings are children. Or this one: All whales are mammals, therefore all mammals are whales.

The early church considered many documents inspired that they did not accept as Scripture, such as *Barnabas*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Clement's *Epistle to the Church at Corinth*. It was not a document's inspiration that led the church to accept it as Scripture. That was not

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enough. The criteria for canonicity was apostolicity and catholicity. A document called the *Didache* (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) may have been inspired, but it was not close enough to the apostolic tradition nor was it widely-enough accepted by both the East and the West, to be canonized as Scripture.

Is it not the case in our own time? God inspires poets, novelists, playwrights, and historians, but that does not make their writings the holy Scriptures. While we cannot limit inspiration to any one age, we can limit the Scriptures to the apostolic age, for that is the basic criterion of Scripture, that it be apostolic. Any person might be "moved by the Spirit" and God may speak to us through anyone — which is what inspiration is — but such experiences do not have the authority of Scripture. Conrad Hilton, the hotel magnet, tells how his life was greatly influenced by a single quotation from Shakespeare that his mother often quoted to him: "To thine own self be true, for it follows as night follows day, that you will not then be false to any man." Might Shakespeare have been inspired of God when he wrote those majestic lines. Of course! That is why great poetry and great art are gifts of God. Inspired but not Scripture! Only prophets and apostles, called of God, give us Scripture. While I believe in ongoing inspiration, I do not believe in ongoing revelation (Scripture) or new Bibles, such as the Mormons would impose on us.

Might not God have inspired the Mayflower Compact or the Constitution of the United States? And many of us see the word of God in Jefferson's great statement, "I swear upon the altar of God eternal hostility against all forms of tyranny over the minds of men." From God perhaps (inspiration) but still not Scripture. Handel's *Messiah* may be inspired music, and more inspiring than some of the psalms, but the church could not properly include it in the psalms of Scripture.

As to the selection of the books of the canon (the church's fixed list of biblical books) it is a matter of fact that some books, such as 2nd and 3rd John and Jude, barely made it and only then after hundreds of years, while others, such as those already named, barely missed being accepted. And it was the church of the early centuries that determined this. While we can believe that God's providential care was at work in all this, it is understandable if one concluded that Clement is more valuable to us than is Jude. The early church did make a place for the non-canonical inspired writings: they are suitable for private edification but not to be read in the church as Scripture. But it was, after all, the church that named the books in the Bible, not a revelation from God. Even so the church was almost four centuries determining the canon of the New Testament as we now have it. But it is reassuring to realize that the church had very high standards for what was Scripture. Beyond the fact of inspiration was that a document had to be written by an apostle or one close to an apostle, so

Mark was readily accepted while *2 Peter* and *Hebrews* were not, their authorship being questionable.

As for the Old Testament, the early church, growing as it did out of Judaism, accepted the canon that was determined by the Jewish church, though the Roman Catholics have always accepted a few additional writings as canonical that Protestants view as apocryphal. But when one reads these books he may decide that 1 Maccabees, which is a history of the Maccabean revolt in the interTestamental period, is of as much value as the historical books of the "Protestant" Old Testament, and almost certainly he will find the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Sirach* (or *Ecclesiasticus*) much more inspiring and informative than *Ecclesiastes* or the *Song of Solomon*. As for the *Song of Solomon,* one is left to wonder why it was ever accepted by either the Jews or the Christians as Scripture. Apart from the device of allegory, it is hardly more than a very carnal love story. Some vain college students have been known to name it as their favorite book in the Bible!

We may therefore concede that the church, both the Jewish and the Christian, may have erred in determining the books of the Bible. But it certainly did not seriously err, for we have the Scriptures we need. And we believe that God was at work in history and in the church to give us the Bible we have, and whether it is the Protestant canon or the Roman Catholic canon does not matter, for the difference is not all that great. After all, both Bibles have "the law, the prophets, and the psalms" as well as the gospels, *Acts*, and the apostolic epistles, and these bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is the essence of all Scripture.

But the fact needs to be emphasized that it was the church that fixed the canon, not divine fiat. It might be better to say that the church simply recognized the documents that gradually came to be recognized as Scripture. And so we may have an imperfect canon, but it is nonetheless an adequate canon. Man is not likely to do anything with absolute perfection, not even with God's help.

As for what inspiration is not, we may further distinguish inspiration from revelation. We can say with the Bible itself that all Scripture is inspired, but even the Bible does not say that all Scripture is revealed. Inspiration is not revelation. Much of the Bible was not revealed, but came from the writer's own experience and research, other documents and information gained from witnesses. *Luke*, for example, is inspired Scripture but it is not revelation. In the preface Luke explains that he drew upon his own experience and other documents in what he wrote. Oftentimes the Bible quotes from another book, line upon line, as in 2 Sam. 1:18 where several verses are taken from the Book of Jasher, a book unknown to us. Much of Ezra 7 is copied directly from Persian archives.

Paul quoted from pagan poets and philosophers. Inspiration but not revelation! I will later explain what I believe inspiration means in this context.

To say that Scripture is inspired does not necessarily mean that it is inspirational. The dull, endless genealogies are inspired Scripture but they are not inspiring. And what a difference there is between Paul's "love hymn" in I Cor. 13 and the purification rites in Leviticus! Some books are both inspiring and uninspiring. There are gems of truth in *Ecclesiastes* but it is overall pessimistic and discouraging. *Esther* tells a great story in which we can see (with some effort) the providence of God at work, but in the end it is grossly vengeful and bloodthirsty. Scholars are still puzzled that it was ever accepted as canonical. It never mentions the name of God and its spiritual value can be questioned. The Jewish church probably accepted it as Scripture because it gives the origin of one of their favorite feasts. And the Christian church accepted it because the Jewish church did!

This brings us to another distinction: *All Scripture is equally inspired but not all Scripture is equally important.* Inspiration does not imply equality. All of Paul's writings are equally inspired, but *Romans* is probably by far the most important. The New Testament is so much more important than the Old that there is hardly any comparison, except that both are inspired Scripture and profitable, as 2 Tim. 3:16 says. But it does not say that all Scripture is *equally* profitable. Jesus refers to "the weightier matters of the law," which implies that there are lighter, less important matters, even though they are still Scripture. This is why we can properly value that old motto, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love." Prophets like Micah assure us that justice, mercy, and humility before God are far more important (essential) than many other things that may be equally inspired, equally Scripture, and equally true. I've known people whose thinking about the Bible was turned completely around when they came to see that while all truth is equally true it is not all equally important. When one learns that she is likely to have a broader view of Christian fellowship, for sectism and legalism are based on the premise that all the New Testament is equally important.

Further, inspiration is not dictation or a verbal, word by word disclosure of the mind of God, though in rare instances this seems to have been the case. Luke had no way of knowing what Agrippa said behind closed doors (Acts 26:30-32) unless the Spirit told him, word by word. And Paul had those moments when God must have spoken to him line by line, as in Eph. 3:3-4: "how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)." Compare how

Paul received certain commandments relative to marriage in I Cor. 7. The "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophets often indicate that they simply repeated what God had revealed to them.

But overall we see that inspiration is more "concursive," as one scholar describes it, which means that the Spirit used normal human forms of composition, including the individual resources, knowledge, skills, and peculiarities of the various writers. This accounts for the diversity (and sometimes conflicts) between writers who describe the same event.

I have yet to define the term inspiration, which is no simple matter inasmuch as the Greek term from which it comes is used only in 2 Tim. 3:16, and that is the only way we know what words mean, by the way they are used. Literally the term means God-breathed, but what are we to make of God-breathed Scriptures? I am persuaded that this simply means that they have their origin in God. Somehow, some way God breathed the Scriptures into existence. They have their source in him. So, 2 Tim. 3:16 could read and we will recognize the fact that the first *is* in the verse is not in the original: "Since all Scripture comes from God it is profitable for doctrine, etc."

This precludes any need for a theory of inspiration. We accept by faith the fact that the Scriptures come from God and are therefore useful, and yet we don't know the *how* of their coming from God. We do not need to know, and we certainly do not need to theorize to the point of creating a doctrine of inspiration. Our word "inspiration" is not even necessary. If we limited ourselves to what Jesus thought of Scripture, we would be in good company. He saw them as authoritative, as the word of God, and as directives for his own life and misson. He spoke of them as "They testify of me," and he saw himself as their fulfillment. It is unlikely that he held any theory of inspiration.

What we need to know is clearly evident in the nature of Scripture. Since they are of human authorship as well as God-breathed, they are indeed both the word of man and the word of God, both natural and super-natural, both historical and beyond history. It is something like the creation of the universe: we know that natural sources have always been at work in a never ending process and yet "the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). The Spirit was "concursive" with human activity in giving us the Bible just as he was with nature in giving us the world as we now have it. With our finite mind we cannot understand the "how" of the God-man process that gave us the Bible anymore than we can understand the God-nature process that gave us the universe.

So, what "All Scripture is inspired of God" is asserting is the activity of God in the whole process of the miracle of Scripture in history. And so it is useful to our needs: doctrine, discipline, instruction in righteousness.

What Scripture is all about is that it lays on our hearts and minds such truths as "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." The glorious miracle is that while it was written by a mere man it somehow has its origin in the breath of God. —*the Editor*

THE WAY TO UNITE IS TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE ALREADY UNITED

If that proposition sounds idiotic to you, allow me to tell a story that will explain what I mean. Some years ago when I was in Geneva, Switzerland attending an ecumenical conference, I had occasion in a private conversation with the representative of the Church of England to refer to Thomas Campbell's great ecumenical dictum: "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, constitutionally and intentionally one." I noted that the old pioneer in a day when divisions among Christians was rife insisted that the church is already one, that by its very nature it cannot be other than one.

The bishop shot right back without any hesitation, "Campbell was right. It is a contradiction to speak of a divided church. Actually the church cannot be divided."

So I am saying that the way to unity is for us to realize that the Church of Christ upon earth is one already. When Campbell spoke of the essential unity of the church he did not yet have a single congregation of what would eventually be known as the "Church of Christ" or "Christian Church." Yet he spoke of the church as existing and as essentially one, which shows that he did not then believe, as many of our people today suppose he did, that the church had ceased to exist and that it was his mission to "restore" it.

If we discipline ourselves to think in terms of the essential unity of God's church — like Paul did when he asked, *Is Christ divided?* — it would go far in making us practically one. Since we cannot ostrich-like ignore the factions, divisions, and sects among Christians, we might say that the unity of the church is real but not yet realized. It is like a marriage in trouble. The couple *is* one, but their oneness is not realized. They do not act as if they are one.

I am persuaded that if we *think* unity — the church is one! — that we will behave more like united people and thus be blessed by "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Notice the language, *the bond of peace.* It is peace that binds us together, and unity is the Spirit's gift to

the church. I am more likely to practice peace if I believe in unity. And unity is not ours to achieve but the Spirit's to bestow. The Spirit has already made the church one. I am to accept the gift — and to behave like one who has accepted the gift. If I allow the Holy Spirit to make his home in my heart and bear fruit in my life, I will accept the gift of oneness with all others in whom the Spirit dwells.

I am presently doing an unusual thing in my home town of Denton, Texas, which is to visit every church within the city limits. I am about half through, having visited about 30 churches of all denominations, including Roman Catholic, Mormon, Quaker, Seventh Day Adventist, Episcopal, and Bible churches, as well as the more usual ones, which in Denton means especially the Baptists. I have already called on some seven Baptist churches and that is less than half that are in our city of 60,000 people.

I may eventually report at length on some of my experiences and impressions, but now I refer to these visits in reference to the point of this article, *thinking unity.* The differences between these churches and my own convictions are of course substantial, especially if we include the Mormons and Roman Catholics (The Mormons, by the way, welcomed me the most graciously!), but in my visits I sought to recognize how much we all have in common, which I find to be far more substantial than our differences. And one fact impressed me strongly: *we all gather to worship Jesus Christ and it is he that we all have in common.* Generally, we sing the same hymns and pray the same prayers and read the same Scriptures — and we all seem to be about equally involved, which is not all that much! We all share in the fellowship of lukewarmness. Our problems are similar.

As I sat with these different churches, I disciplined myself to think of them as my sisters and brothers, as part of the one, holy, apostolic, catholic church on earth. I do not mean that I believe the Presbyterian Church as such is the Body of Christ, or the Baptist Church or the Church of Christ. These are all denominations and most of us realize that denominations are an aberration from what God intended and ought not to exist. But I do believe that the Body of Christ is present in Denton, Texas, and that it is composed of all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and who obey him according to their understanding, to quote Alexander Campbell. I presume, both from their profession and their conduct, that there are members of the Body of Christ in all these denominations.

So the Body of Christ is out there, scattered among a tragically divided Christendom. But the Body of Christ is not divided. And so I say to myself as I visit a church that is wholly new to me, except that I always see a few people that I have known for a long time, having lived here for 25 years: *there are those here who love and follow Jesus Christ just as I do; they are my sisters and brothers, and we are one in Christ.*

We obviously do not see everything eye-to-eye, but unity is not a matter of doctrinal agreement, but a matter of "speaking the same thing" about Jesus Christ. We may even be more comfortable in our own congregations, but still we are one if together we are in Jesus Christ. We might be agreeably separated and still be one.

And if we will think this way more, rather than emphasizing our differences, we will begin to be with each other more and do things together. We may not be able to do everything together, not now at least, but surely we can do some things together.

So I urge you to join me in a mid-course correction in our thinking. Think unity! The church is one! Wherever God has a son or daughter you and I have a brother or sister, and we are all united in the only church there is, the community of Jesus Christ. All this in spite of denominations.

And this we can do without compromising any truth we hold. I can enjoy fellowship with a person without endorsing everything he believes. I can attend a Roman Catholic mass or a Presbyterian service and enjoy being with my neighbors and sharing with them without approving of everything such people may believe. Just as I can attend a family reunion and have a barrel of fun without endorsing every fool thing my kinfolk may believe or do.

We are to remember that we are to be followers of Jesus Christ and not a party. A party may demand that we love and have fellowship only with those in the party, whereas Jesus Christ was a friend of despised tax collectors and sinners, including harlots. If Jesus kept such company as that — and enjoyed it! — we should have no problem in associating with those who profess to be his followers. And if they call themselves Christians, talk like Christians, and act like Christians, perhaps they are — even if they are not of us! — *the Editor*

DO WE SLEEP AND AWAIT A FINAL JUDGMENT?

In his provocative *Foolishness to the Greeks,* Leslie Newbigen, longtime ecumenical leader, calls the modern church to judgment in reference to how it has allowed culture to impact its values rather than the other way around. In his list of things the church must do to regain the initiative in bearing witness to the secular world is to recover a viable eschatology or a doctrine of last things. His admonition set me to thinking about what the average church member believes about life after death, the resurrection,

and a final judgment. So in this piece I am raising a few questions with some suggested answers.

While we are to avoid sheer speculation, we must show courage in venturing into areas where we have but little information, for even sparse revelation is precious when it enlightens us in reference to the "one hope of your calling." Where God discloses much on a subject we should desire to learn much, where he has disclosed but little we should desire to know that little. Dt. 29:29 seems appropriate in any age: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

It is commonly believed that when we die we "sleep in Jesus," to use the language of 1 Thess. 4:13, until the resurrection, at which time our bodies will be raised, as 1 Thess. 4 goes on to indicate, and then we gather with all mankind in a general judgment, where the sheep are separated from the goats, the righteous from the unrighteous, as Mt. 25:32f. is persumed to teach. Once our destiny is determined at this final judgment, we go to heaven or hell.

Recently I asked several members of the Church of Christ about this scenario of last things, and while they were a bit uncomfortable with the questions they generally agreed that that is what they believe. A recent graduate of ACU was not hesitant as he assured me "I am convinced that that is what the Bible teaches." I respect his confidence, for these notions are generally believed by all Christians.

I am persuaded, however, that this is an area where we have done hardly any critical thinking, and we seem oblivious to the glaring contradictions in our position. We will, for example, hold to a "soul sleeping" view as we speak of dear old grandmother now being with the Lord or a beloved brother now being in heaven. Are our loved ones now in heaven before the resurrection and before the final judgment? If so, what happens to the notion of a final judgment where one's eternal destiny is determined?

Do we really believe some of the things we say we believe? Take the old Scottish divine, who, upon dedicating a new cemetery, said: "What a lovely place to be buried! On resurrection morning those who lie here can awake to the scenes of this beautiful garden."

Do we believe that graves will be literally opened and bodies will literally come forth? In the long history of humankind most graves have disappeared in the shifting, eroding earth, and graves are stacked on top of each other. The remains have become a part of the natural elements from which they came. What kind of graves have the multitudes that "sleep" in the sea, and how literally are we to take such language as "The sea gave up the dead that were in it" (Rev. 20:13)?

Paul was himself uncertain enough about how these things will be to write, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain — perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body" (1 Cor. 15:35-38).

It is enough for us to believe that it will be as God pleases. And Paul makes it clear that the body that is laid in the grave is not the body that shall be. May we not therefore conclude that "the resurrection of the body" is a symbol of the great truth that the believer will have life beyond the grave. Death is not the end of life but the beginning of the life which is life indeed. And we shall have bodies like unto Christ's glorious body, according to Philip. 3:21. There is therefore no place for an actual opening of graves or a coming forth of bodies. Graves disappear and bodies turn to dust, but while this is happening the believers who once occupied those bodies are already with Christ in eternity. This is the meaning of "resurrection."

I take this to mean that the body in which I live has no destiny beyond the "grave," and I put that word in quotation marks since my body will not likely be buried in the usual sense. As the card that I carry in my wallet indicates, my body upon death is to be transferred to Southwestern Medical School in Dallas to be used in medical research. It will eventually be disposed of. I never expect to see it again. It is like a house I leave behind when I move to a better one or like an old garment laid aside never to be used again. I am through with it, *forever.* It will no longer be part of me. I will have moved out, leaving it vacant. If those left behind can make some use of it, I will be pleased.

But I will have a body, and if I read 2 Cor. 5:1-3 aright, I will have it immediately upon leaving my old body, else "We shall not be found naked" has no meaning. I am persuaded in the light of Scripture that there is no such thing as a disembodied spirit or soul. There may even be a temporary "building" (2 Cor. 5 again) until we eventually have "the body like unto his glory" at the consummation of all things. In any event, Paul seemed assured that he would never "be found naked," either on earth or in heaven, which means to be without a body, even though he had an earth-to-heaven experience that was so breathtaking that he did not know whether he was in the body or out (2 Cor. 12). While this indicates that a Christian might have "out of body" experiences, he does not have "out of body" permanent existence.

It is appropriate to ask what Jesus believed about death, resurrection, and final judgment — particularly in terms of sleeping in the grave awaiting the resurrection.

I am convinced that Jesus believed what Paul believed when he wrote, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philip. 1:23), for he spoke with that same certainty when he told the thief on the cross beside him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). Just as Paul believed that when he died (the moment he died!) he would be with Christ, so Jesus believed (*Assuredly,* he said) that the dying thief would be with him in heaven in a matter of hours.

Think of it, from a cross to the glories of heaven in the blink of an eye! The same promise is for us: while they are poking around on us to see if we are dead or alive we will already be in heavenly glory, and when that glad day comes we will be amazed that we could have ever had any fear of "death." In fact we will then know, as we should now believe, that there is no such thing as death for the believer, if by death is meant the end of life.

There is also the experience that Jesus had with his disciples on the mount of transfiguration (Lk. 9) when Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory" and spoke with Christ concerning the ordeal he faced. It shows that Moses and Elijah were not asleep in some tomb awaiting resurrection and judgment, but were "in glory" and knew what was going on. Jesus taught similarly in Lk. 20:38 when he said, "He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him." He was saying that while Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had "died" they were still alive. God is not the God of the dead because there are no dead — "All live unto him," our Lord assures us — at least no dead believers.

The story of Jairus' daughter in Mt. 9 is tantalizingly interesting in reference to what Jesus believed about death. All around her insisted that she was dead — and we even insist that she was! — but Jesus said that she was only asleep. Does this suggest that Jesus believed that "death" doesn't make all that much difference?

Since the Scriptures, including the teaching of Jesus, is unequivocal in placing the believer in the presence of God upon death — such a forceful affirmation as "When we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8), being another instance — we may wonder why a "resting in their graves till the resurrection and judgment" doctrine could ever have become widely believed.

It is because of a misunderstanding of what the Bible says about a coming judgment, particularly the parable of the sheep and the goats in Mt. 25. It is supposed that Jesus here pictures all individuals who ever lived gathered in a great assize, and that their destiny is determined then and there, depending upon their works, and so they are separated, the sheep from the goats.

Such an interpretation has grave difficulties, one being that it assumes as true what the Scriptures consistly contradict, that the destiny of a soul has to await a final judgment. If so, Jesus could never have assured the thief the way he did. He could only have said, "I'll see what I can do for you when the time comes."

The Bible definitely teaches that there is a judgment to come (and in one sense already here) but such a judgment is not to determine whether one goes to heaven or hell.

Since Mt. 25 has the righteous going into eternal life and the wicked into eternal punishment, it appears that we have a confirmation of this doctrine. But this is a judgment of *nations* ("All nations will be gathered before him," verse 32), not of individuals. This would figure, for individuals could hardly be judged by the drawing of a line, the righteous on one side, the wicked on the other, for there is too much of both good and evil in us all for that kind of judgment. But such a judgment can be made of nations.

Pictures of judgment can be symbols of God's authority, depicting him as the one to whom we must give account. Or judgment may symbolize the determination of awards — "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

But such judgment does not determine destiny, for that is already determined. We determine that for ourselves each day of our lives by the decisions we make and the things we do, and by our appeal to the gospel of Christ and the mercy of God. And so we can know our eternal destiny *now.* But our awards are not yet determined.

There is no necessary connection between facing judgment and a determination of destiny. Even in earthly courts a man is found guilty by his peers and they often determine his punishment. Yet at a later time he goes before the judge for judgment. The judge issues a sentence that has already been determined, which makes it only a symbol or a formalizing of what has already been done.

Life is a continual judgment. We know when we do right and when we do wrong. We only need to look to Christ whose presence in our lives is a continual judgment. To be sure, the day of death will be a day of judgment, for Christ will then be clearer to us than ever before and we will know as we are known.

Some of us who have had difficulty in being assured may be in for a glorious surprise — that we have lived much closer to Christ than we realized! —*the Editor*

A LODGE AMONG CUCUMBERS

by W. Carl Ketcherside

The daughter of Zion is left as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.
— Is. 1:8

The world around us is changing. All of us know that. Many try to ignore it. They want to awaken and find things exactly as they have always been. But we are in the Space Age. The horse and buggy days have gone forever. We can no longer operate as we once did. The day of the three week meetings every night including Saturdays, is past. It is over and gone. I once held a seven week long series of such meetings. It went right through Christmas and New Year. I immersed seventy people. The congregation where I held it now has less than twenty.

The times are like they were in the days of Isaiah. And the modern daughter of Zion is being left like a cottage in a vineyard. All the grapes have been plucked. The vines are tangled. The leaves have fallen off. There is no use to maintain a shelter against the sun and rain. No one is going to steal anything. The cottage is broken down. The windows have been knocked out. The roof is shattered. If the Lord had not left a small remnant we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah. Brethren do not realize this as yet. They protest that all is well. But they are merely treading the courts. They are calling assemblies.

It is high time that we make some changes. We must "relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Our large cities are social pig pens. That is why everyone has moved to the polished suburban areas. The alcoholics, drug users, immoral and retarded are without hope and without God in the world. It is time for those who search garbage dumps for pizza crusts to find something better to digest. And it is as we go among them that they will find incense which is not an abomination and feasts that God's soul does not hate.

We must cease to depend upon professional preachers to save the world. One of the greatest demonstrations of our day is the World Bible Class. It makes use of any man, woman or child who wants to be a teacher. Hundreds of people in remote areas of the world are being led to Christ by people of whom they have never heard before. Communities of believers are meeting in jungle fastnesses to worship the Lord of hosts. It is not done by a formal, stilted, dyed-in-the-wool process but by simple lessons drawn from the Word.

It is time for us to begin in our country. The best way appears to be by home Bible study classes. If two or three gather to search the scriptures God will bless it. We will have to get out of our church "edifices" to do it. Modern man is scared silly of "church buildings." He is afraid they are traps, set and baited. He will seldom go near one. He fights shy of

them. Any child of God can teach a home study. Where Nell and I attend there are three going on. One is for women, one is taught in the home of newer members, another in a storefront.

Those who live in an apartment can secure a study for the others who dwell there. This means that women will not have to leave its security to risk getting out on the street. Such a study can be taught by anyone who is familiar with the Book. Teacher and pupils will grow as they search the scriptures together. Everyone can get in on it. There will be no more sour faces because one was not called upon, or because one was given more to do than another. Think of new arrangements for teaching the Word. If nothing else, go to a nursing home and bring joy and comfort.

I want to make a special plea for instruction of the young, especially teen-agers. They are definitley in need of frank and open sharing. They should be taught the dangers of alcohol, drugs and dope. They need meaningful instruction about sex. And they must be taught about suicide. It is important that they see an example of genuine love shown to them. They must be taught self-respect, dignity and the value of commitment to one greater than self. If you have the ability to teach youth I urge you not to delay. It is now or never. In a few years it will be too late.

There must be a real concern for the aged and lonely. Our population is gradually becoming older. This is a strange phenomenon. But it presents a duty and an opportunity. The banishment of the silver-haired to homes where other aged and sick appear is not enough. Those who conceived and delivered us into the world deserve more than arbitrary abandonment. They should not be condemned to wither like a dying oak or like a garden that no one waters. We should not become irate at some of the traditional positions to which they cling. They are merely voicing what they have been taught — echoing the things of yesterday.

It is time to remember that mere giving of money will not postpone the coming of disaster. God said to ancient Israel, "Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering to me? . . . Who asked you to bring all this when you came to worship me? Who asked you to do all this tramping around in my Temple? It is useless to bring your offerings. I am disgusted with the smell of the incense you burn" (Isaiah 1:11-13). We must realize that the destruction of transgressors and sinners shall be together, and those who forsake the Lord will be condemned.

The prescription has been written out. The remedy is ready for the taking. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." This is a definition of repentance. Surely it is necessary in our lives. Unless we plan to be "as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that has no water," we had better plan to get right with God today. Tomorrow may be too late. We may become like a lodge among cucumbers!

OPPORTUNITIES IN FELLOWSHIP

(Part Two)

by Robert O. Fife

We have said that it is the purpose of our fellowship which reveals what we "endorse." We have also said that the "ground" of our fellowship is found in our understanding of the Lordship of Jesus. In light of these two principles, let us examine some of the options open to us.

1. *Cooperation in Campus Ministries.*

Scattered over the nation are dozens of campus ministries sponsored by Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. At some universities, such as Purdue, the work sponsored by Christian Churches is highly respected. At others, such as the University of Texas, the work of the Churches of Christ is well established.

Facing the secularism, Marxism, cultism, and even witchcraft on American campuses are our differences of such significance that we ought not join hands? Or must we duplicate campus work for fear that a seeking student might be "misled" into one or other of our separate camps?

2. *Famine Relief.*

When the Churches of Christ raised money for Polish relief, would it have been forbidden for Christian Churches to participate?

Are Churches of Christ aware of the existence of the International Disaster Emergency Service, Inc.? This institution is sponsored by Christian Churches and their members. It has given hundreds of thousands of dollars in emergency aid throughout the world. The policy of IDES is to work through missionaries of the Restoration Movement who labor in such areas. Could members of the Churches of Christ participate in such work?

3. *Christian Higher Education.*

It is a commonplace that there has often been more fellowship among faculties of our schools than is usual among leaders of the local churches. In a time of shrinking dollars available for education, is it unthinkable that we should begin to consider combining some of our educational efforts?

One also thinks of the strategic work being done by such institutions as the Institute for the Study of Christian Origins in Tubingen, West Germany. Sponsored by the European Evangelistic Society, the Institute has engaged in substantive research into Christian origins — a subject certainly important to a people who would restore New Testament Christianity. The Institute has won the respect of the Theological Faculty of the University. It also hosts a *gemeinde* (congregation) which exists as a free Church of Christ amidst a culture which for centuries has only known State Church. Individual scholars of Churches of Christ in America have studied in the Institute. Would the congregations from which they come think it inappropriate to share in support of this strategic work?

4. *Congregational Cooperation.*

But let us "bite the bullet" and speak of the local scene. A few years ago in California, a Church of Christ obtained valuable property near the University of California, Irvine. Christian Churches were also planning to establish a congregation there. The Church of Christ initiated overtures looking toward sharing facilities. This would have released the funds which would have been necessary to purchase a second property for the Christian Church. These funds could then have been used for missions, evangelism, education, or charity. The plan was never consummated, which many of us deeply regretted.

The reverse of the plan in now underway in Lincoln, Nebraska, where a Church of Christ may commence using the facilities of a Christian Church.

Some years ago, Christian Churches of Greater Chicago established the Christain Service Center in a near westside ghetto. My son, Wayne Earl, became the Center's first Director, laboring there for seven years. Near the Center was a storefront Church of Christ. In light of its presence, no effort was made to establish a Christian Church at the Center. Rather, Wayne and his wife Kathleen became members of the storefront congregation. When this congregation lost its lease, the Christian Service Center made its facilities available without charge. But this raises a question: Even though Black Muslims were penetrating the area, should the Church of Christ have refused associating with a work of Christian Churches until the instrumental music question was settled?

5. *Evangelism.*

Perhaps it is yet too early to hope that we may someday see a cooperative evangelistic effort on the part of Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. What are the barriers? Lack of acquaintance and trust in many communities. Use or non-use of instruments in services. Finding "safe" persons to lead such endeavors. And, perhaps the most difficult issue would be the possibility that some converts would be led into fellowship with the "wrong" congregations.

But the positive factors exist as well: We believe the same Gospel of the Living Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We call sinners to faith in Him, repentance, confession, and immersion for the remission of sins. We believe in the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and the mandate to a Christian life. We all believe in the Church.

Think of the power which could be released if the cities of the land were to see us united in evangelism! To speak commonly, the Enemy wouldn't know what hit him!

Such a prospect may be beyond the life span of many of us. But who knows? There may be a community where the people of our churches have sufficient love, understanding, and courage to join in proclaiming

their blessed Messiah. One thing seems sure: If we are taught to "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers" into whitened fields, (Mt. 9:38) we must surely have supreme reasons for withholding from Him the strength of a united proclamation of His Good News!

Conclusion.

I have attempted to present the critical character of our division as it is seen from the standpoint of our common conflict with the "principalities and powers" of this age.

I have attempted to show that fellowship in some things does not constitute approval of everything. Rather, it is the *purpose* of our fellowship in a given task, and the *ground* of our involvement which determine what we "endorse." Thus, when those who oppose instrumental music and those who use the instrument cooperate *for the purpose of feeding the hungry,* their cooperation has nothing to do with the instrumental music issue. It only has to do with their common concern for the hungry. Moreover, such cooperation is grounded in this question: In the face of starving millions, what would Jesus have us do?

In the third place, I have suggested some of the many avenues of involvement which may be available to us now or in the future.

That some have condemned, and will continue to condemn, our association together seems inevitable. Our coming to a common mind concerning "the law of inclusion and exclusion" seems all important to these brethren. But some of us have a different perspective.

There happens to be a war on, and we see the enemy for who he is. He is not our brothers in the Churches of Christ or Christian Churches. The Enemy is the one who tempted our Lord in the desert, and who still continues his nefarious work as "the Accuser of our brethren" (Rev. 12:10). From the beginning he is a liar who sows seeds of discord. Even as he leads multitudes into eternal darkness, nothing gives him more demonic glee than to turn brother against brother. While the soldiers of the King are preoccupied with controversy, the Enemy captures strongholds with ease.

Far be it from me to believe the Accuser's lie that my mortal opponent is a fellow believer who would die for Jesus!

I truly believe that our common service will help us find a common mind concerning the differences which have brought us such distress.

Let the trumpet give no uncertain sound. We are prepared to die for the right to speak the Word of God. But the right to be heard is granted by the hearer. As men *see our good works* they will glorify our Father in heaven (Mt. 5:16). So let us lock our arms together in the wondrous Name of the Servant King. Then, beholding our joyous solidarity in ministry, this generation will be more ready to hear the Good News of eternal salvation.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

The Cross Lanes Church of Christ in Charleston, WV published a favorable report of Restoration Forum V which was held in Cincinnati last April, a gathering of some 210 people from Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. The minister, Keith Watkins, who attended the forum, wrote in the bulletin: "Even if the end result is that they will stay with their view of music and we stay with ours, but we at least recognize each other as part of God's family, that will be a far cry from where we are now." He also said that since our Lord wants us to be united we should seek to know and accept each other. He told of a joke that circulated at the forum, that they should all have worn name tags identifying their persuasion, for otherwise they could not tell each other apart. That illustrates what the Church of Christ would find generally true if we had more contact with the church at large, that we have far more in common with other Christians than we have differences. We must overcome our mentality of "unity by exclusion" that all these years has kept us apart from the church catholic.

We have information from the board of *Mission* journal that the publication is to close down with its December issue, "buried with dignity" as one board member puts it. Dignity is the right word, for the journal has had a long and impressive mission among Churches of Christ, demonstrating that our people have at least some appreciation for bold, innovative and responsible journalism. *Mission* has been a pioneer publication, and we owe much to those who gave it birth and saw it through to maturity. While it is sometimes as appropriate for journals to die as it is for men to, we will nonetheless miss *Mission.*

One more publication that is out on the growing edge and addressing itself to issues that concern or should concern Churches of Christ is *The Reformer,* edited by Buff Scott, Jr., 1003 Pilot Ave., Cherokee, IA 51012, subscription rate only $2.00 per annum. In the current issue the editor accuses the church of "proclaiming unity while promoting division," and he wants to know what we mean when we use the term "the Brotherhood." And Mike Hall has an article on "The Legalistic Mindset." Should you write for a sample copy it is likely that you would eventually subscribe.

READERS' EXCHANGE

When both parents pass away there is a change which takes place in a person. Now that my father is gone as well as my mother I know I can never in this life ask for their advice. It now falls on me to "play the man," knowing that I am now the head of my class. It makes a difference in one's life-view. My father was a good man. *—Loyd Hall, Gatesville, TX.*

Thank you for such a good publication. It keeps me hopeful for the future of the Churches of Christ *—Marlene Oehlschlaeger, Princeville, OR.*

There are sweeping changes taking place in Churches of Christ all across the country. It is the biggest reformation of thought that I have seen in my 33 years of life. While I would credit those whose goal has been to stimulate us to think and to change our unbiblical and ungodly attitudes, I also credit the availability of readable translations of the Bible. While the King James and American Standard versions may be acceptable, they are difficult for one who simply wants to find out what God wants him to do. Many of us have been illiterate when it comes to reading the Bible for comprehension. Now that we have the NIV, the RSV, and the New American Standard there is no excuse to remain ignorant of the Bible. But it appears that there is an "old guard" in the Churches of Christ that does not want people reading these versions and prefer that the people remain ignorant and thus be dependant on them for an interpretation of the Bible. *—Randy Travis, Madisonville, KY.*

There are two things about the Disciples gathering in Indianapolis that I took great comfort in. First, I was thrilled that liberals

and conservatives, and even independents, non-instrument folks and our U.C.C. friends could gather together to approach the issues of the Christian Church 19 years after restructure. We've at least started the process of accepting one another again. Finally, I remain hopeful of the future. The region of the Christian Church in Pennsylvania has superb leadership and is developing a holistic ministry that is equipping the believers to carry out an evangelistic ministry. We have many other vigorous organizations that contain a strong evangelistic edge in the Christian Churches, also. *—Larry O. Toney, First Christian Church, New Kensington, PA.*

We are aware that the final word has not been spoken on women's role in the life of the church. We are trying to steer a balanced and steady course that will not seriously offend the sensitive consciences on one hand yet not violate basic Biblical truth on the other. Troy church has engaged extensively in the study of the ministry of women, from the Hebrew scriptures and Greek and Roman culture to Jesus and the New Testament. *—Joseph F. Jones, Troy Church of Christ, MI.*

BOOK NOTES

Many of our readers will know of David Reagan and his Lamb and Lion Ministries, but they may not know of his recently published book, *Trusting God,* which is autobiographical in that it tells of his saga from "20 years of running from God," as he puts it, with all their incredible ups and downs, to his present ministry, which is an unlikely one, considering his background, which was mainline Church of Christ. His frequent references to his background will interest Church of Christ readers, even if a bit chastening. Order directly from him at Drawer K, McKinney, TX 75069, $7.00 postpaid.

Our readers continue to benefit from William Neil's *Difficult Sayings of Jesus* and *More Difficult Sayings of Jesus.* They include such as: "You are not far from the kingdom of God" to "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," scores of difficult sayings explained by a very readable and eminent Scottish theologian. $9.50 for both, postpaid.

Those who collect Restoration studies will want *Crying in the Wilderness,* a biography of David Lipscomb by Robert E. Hooper. $15.95 postpaid.

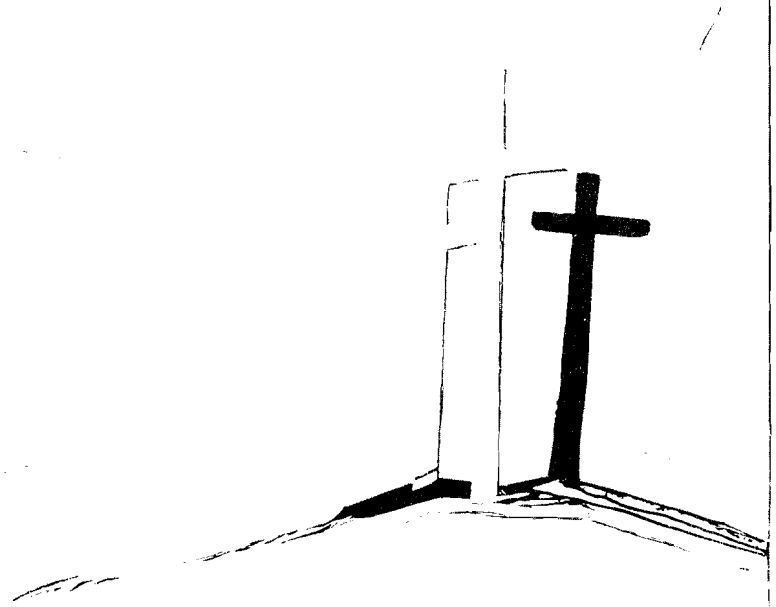
This bicentennial year is a good time to read John W. Whitehead's *An American Dream.* He shows how our founding fathers dreamed of resistance, rights, and hope: resistance to illegitimate government, rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, hope of a better future. These three values spring from a worldview that is all but lost in our time. $9.50 postpaid.

We are pleased to recommend *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* by F. F. Bruce, a veritable goldmine of information on Paul, the New Testament, and the early church. $21.50 postpaid.

One might say that anything written by C. S. Lewis is worth reading and that may go for anything *about* him as well. Lovers of Lewis will want a copy of David Barrett's *C. S. Lewis and His World,* which we can send you for $10.50 postpaid.

John R. W. Scott is another perennial favorite, and his latest is *The Cross of Christ,* which Scott sees as the basis of believing in God. $15.50 postpaid.

RESTORATION REVIEW



I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I have of this truth — that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it." I move, therefore, that these proceedings begin with prayer to God. — *Benjamin Farnklin, before the Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia, 1787.*

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